

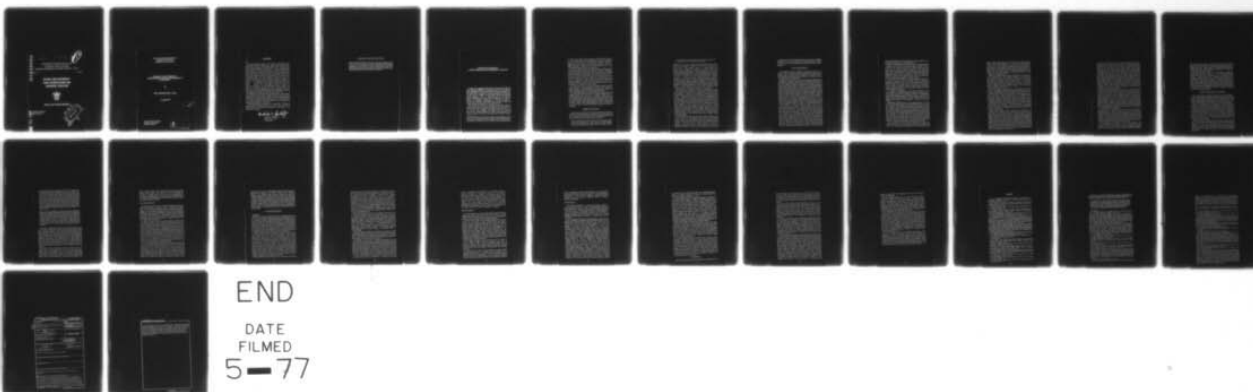
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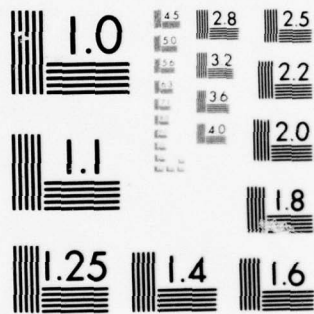
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**DETENTE AND DETERRENCE:  
THEIR INTERRELATIONS AND  
HISTORICAL EVOLUTION**



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**DETENTE AND DETERRENCE:  
THEIR INTERRELATIONS AND HISTORICAL  
EVOLUTION**

**by**

**First Lieutenant Keith A. Dunn**

**11 April 1977**

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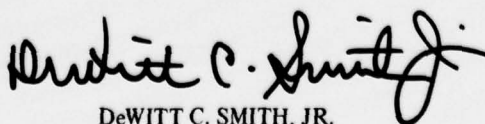


## FOREWORD

This memorandum discusses how detente and deterrence are interrelated. A group of scholars have claimed that the United States views detente through rose-colored glasses. Their charge is that American decision-makers view *detente as an end to Soviet-American conflict* whereas the Soviets use detente as a means to further their goals through social, economic, political and even surrogate military confrontation with the Western World. In examining US and Soviet declaratory positions since the end of World War II, the author of this memorandum finds very little difference between Soviet and US positions. He views the detente impulse as relating to nuclear war avoidance, while conventional and nuclear deterrence capabilities are efforts to be prepared in case detente should fail. From their declaratory positions, the United States and the Soviet Union are shown to recognize this interrelationship between detente and deterrence. The author concludes that, since it would be folly to ask nations to overlook the possibility that detente may fail someday, we will continue to see both the United States and the USSR work to build their military forces at the same time they pursue detente.

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This memorandum was prepared as a contribution to the field of national security research and study. As such, it does not reflect the official view of the College, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.



DeWITT C. SMITH, JR.  
Major General, USA  
Commandant

#### **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR**

**FIRST LIEUTENANT KEITH A. DUNN** joined the Strategic Studies Institute in 1976. Prior to his present position, he taught at the US Army Security Agency Training Center and School and was the Aide-de-Camp for the Deputy Commandant of the US Army War College. Lieutenant Dunn graduated from Southeast Missouri State University, earned a master's degree in history, and a PhD in American diplomacy from the University of Missouri.

# **DETENTE AND DETERRENCE: THEIR INTERRELATIONS AND HISTORICAL EVOLUTION**

Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) and Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) have stimulated a flood of new articles and books although the issues involved have long historical precedents. In the United States, the concern of both the government and the public on issues such as whether the United States should accept strategic nuclear sufficiency, parity, or superiority vis-a-vis the USSR and whether developments in Angola and the Middle East are related to detente has stimulated reexamination of American thoughts on detente\* and deterrence. Unfortunately, some of these new works fail to place detente and deterrence in historical perspective.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the dynamic nature of detente and deterrence, the interrelationship of these two concepts in American and Soviet perspectives, the historical interrelations of the two concepts, and to suggest some insights useful for today and tomorrow. In a traditional balance of power system, antagonists would build their military forces and at the same time seek allies to maintain

\*Although the former Ford Administration tried to expunge "detente" from its lexicon, the term is still used to connote an alleged new relationship between the United States and USSR. While the term is imperfect and often misunderstood, I have chosen to use "detente" because it continues to have this popular meaning.

or improve their position. This process has continued. But, at the same time, the United States and the USSR have recognized that shifting power too far in one direction could have disastrous results. "Hotlines," disarmament talks, nuclear nonproliferation discussions, SALT and MBFR meetings are indications of a Soviet-American trend to ease tensions that might otherwise lead to nuclear war.

Such steps, however, are not to imply that state conflicts between the Soviet Union and America have been, or ever will be, eliminated. Nations, particularly those with such diverse world views as the USSR and the United States, will attempt to increase their respective power positions in relation to other states. As C. G. Jacobsen, in his study on Soviet arms control, has written: "Neither power can allow itself to be put in a position where it appears inferior, however misleading that designation might be in reality."<sup>1</sup> When one superpower tries to raise its power position, the other, in the classic balance of power reaction, will endeavor to counteract the other's moves.

The superpowers share two political working propositions which, together, amount to a logical dilemma: the need to avoid nuclear war and the balance of power imperative that the economic, political and military advantages of one must be countered by the other.

For some people there is a belief that detente and deterrence are incompatible ideas. But whatever one's personal preferences may be, national leaders feel the need to maintain armed forces as countervailing weights against perceived enemies and they believe these forces preserve peace. At the same time they recognize a need to reduce or prevent tensions in US-USSR relationships. Deterrence and detente must then coexist.<sup>2</sup> What I shall demonstrate is that a continued role for military power is not only inevitable but necessary for the process of detente.

#### AMERICAN ATTITUDES

It takes only a brief study of American policymakers' statements to observe how they think detente and deterrence are interconnected. In his 1974 State of the Union speech, former President Richard M. Nixon stressed that defense and world peace were interrelated:

In the past five years we have made more progress toward a lasting structure of peace in the world . . . We could not have made that progress if we had not maintained the military strength of America. Thomas Jefferson once observed that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance. By the



same token and for the same reason in today's world, the price of peace is a strong defense as far as the United States is concerned.<sup>3</sup>

Former US Army Chief of Staff General Creighton W. Abrams told a World Peace luncheon in October 1973 that detente gave some fuel—"at least some semantic basis"—for those interested in disarmament to campaign for reduction in military forces. "The world," Abrams said however, "had not reached an era of Utopian world peace when military forces could be eliminated. Our country can avoid war," he told the group, "only by showing clearly that, while we are anxious to avoid war, we are willing and able to fight if necessary . . ." Nearly 2 years later, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, Arthur A. Hartman, repeated Abrams' theme when he told the House of Representatives' Committee on Foreign Affairs that detente and appeasement had no relationship in current American thought. The American perception of detente required military strength inferior to none. Hartman did not expect that the Soviets would "exercise restraint in their relations with us out of good will."<sup>4</sup>

Granted, there are conflicts in the American government over how far the United States should go in its detente policies. One view is that the Department of Defense has to equalize or counter every Soviet move because, as one supporter entitled his speech, "Weakness Invited Conflict."<sup>5</sup> Adherents of this view argue that the important issue for strategic weapons is throw weight and in this area the USSR exceeds the United States. On the other hand, adherents of another view believe that the USSR and the United States attained the balance of terror a long time ago and no longer need to increase the ability to destroy each other. Supporters of this outlook focus on the number of missile warheads rather than throw weight and in the former area the United States has an advantage vis-à-vis the USSR. Adherents of the two perspectives differ on how to measure American strategic deterrence capabilities and how those measurements relate to the goal of detente. They agree, however, that the United States needs a credible strategic deterrent capability.

While the debate between the above two views is important, they share a principle. For the argument that deterrence makes detente possible, there is very little difference between a leading exponent of the second view saying, "We will be flexible and cooperative in settling conflicts . . . But we will never permit detente to turn into a subterfuge for unilateral action," and a supporter of the first view arguing the following: "Though we should pursue detente vigorously,

we should pursue it without illusion. Detente rests upon an underlying equilibrium of force, the maintenance of a military balance." Neither groups wants to see the United States regress from its present power position.<sup>6</sup>

#### SOVIET PERCEPTIONS

Some authors attempt to describe one coherent Soviet view of detente.<sup>7</sup> While this makes labelling the USSR much easier, such an approach fails to account for the multiplicity of views that seem to exist in Moscow. Roger Hamburg recently made one of the best efforts to describe Soviet views of detente.

Hamburg saw four themes in Soviet policy and he described them as submergence, convergence, divergence and emergence. Submergence is the classic Marxist-Lennist view which argues military power must support the ideology and military weaknesses courts disaster. Adherents of submergence view detente as a result of increasing USSR military and economic strength. This view is by far the most offensive because if socialism is demonstrating its superiority, there are few reasons to limit conflicts between the United States and USSR. Convergence, Hamburg argues, is equally hardline but lacks the military emphasis. Convergent theorists stress that the USSR is proving the inherent viability of socialism because of high economic growth rates in the Soviet Union. Thus, detente occurs because "industrialization imposes its own rules which lead to a certain uniform behavior between economies at similar stages of economic development." Those of a divergent persuasion see no growing together because of similar US and USSR industrialization trends. Rather, divergent theorists believe that the two socio-political-economic systems are growing further and further apart. This separation should not cause alarm, the divergent argues, because neither the United States nor the USSR want to risk converting each other. The costs of proselytizing or conversion are too risky and might lead to conflict. Thus, the divergent theorist argues that the USSR and the United States must accept the differences between themselves and work within the defined parameters for economic and social progress. Finally, the emergent view is closely related to the divergent view. Often emergence and divergence views mesh together and sometimes blur the distinctions between them. Thus, Hamburg describes emergence as "a more evolved stage of divergence when neither side feels it can gain major tactical advantage over the other. The benefits of

mutual interdependence and cooperation are then recognized as an inducible fact of national and international life."<sup>8</sup>

Lawrence Caldwell also has described internal Soviet divisions using "modernist" and "orthodox" models. According to Caldwell, a Soviet "modernist" seeks international stability through negotiation. This group stresses modern technical competence over ideological considerations. In this regard, the "modernists" have aligned themselves with a group of Soviet military officers "who have also stressed modern technology, arguing that it has altered the nature, and reduced the likelihood, of war by enhancing deterrence." Thus, the "modernists" have stressed deterrence and detente as objective goals.<sup>9</sup>

The "orthodox" view supports a traditional ideological perspective. This group continues to see the struggle between socialism and imperialism as inevitable. They stress that capitalist states are hostile toward socialism and socialist states must always be prepared to counter attempts to violently overthrow socialism. They view detente as only a tactical maneuver in an arena where capitalist and socialist blocs inherently are inimical.<sup>10</sup>

It is possible to speculate about the relative importance of the various factions by observing internal movements of Soviet personnel. For example, in April 1975, the Politburo dismissed A. N. Shelepin as a member. Since Shelepin apparently wanted to pursue a more active and hard-line position than Brezhnev's detente policies allowed, it was speculated that Shelepin's removal signalled a triumph for the detente factions.<sup>11</sup>

Philosophical differences exist as the examples indicate, but there are also institutional problems in ascertaining Soviet views on detente and deterrence. Studies have shown that Soviet foreign policy elites view problems from a different perspective than domestic economy rulers. Older members of the party are more prone to have greater doctrinal stereotypes when analyzing foreign policy issues than younger party members. Soviet foreign policymakers who are involved directly and extensively in foreign affairs are less affected by doctrinal stereotypes than those leaders who are involved peripherally in foreign affairs.<sup>12</sup> In essence this proliferation of Soviet views on foreign affairs, of which detente is a central theme at the present, should cause one to search for a central theme that may coalesce the divergent views.

As in the American case, the Soviet solidifying issue apparently is military deterrence, or a strong defense makes detente possible. This view, as one would expect, is more evident in the writings of Soviet



military writers. Expounding on the Soviet Union's military power, former Soviet Defense Minister A. A. Grechko told the 24th CPSU Congress that the government's initial success toward peaceful coexistence occurred because the USSR had the military capability to deter the West: "The realization of the foreign policy program of the CPSU which was formulated by the Congress will depend in a large measure on the defense capability of the Soviet state and on the condition of its Armed Forces."<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, 15 different Soviet officers and generals in 1973 published a new contribution for the *Officer's Library*. In the book they reiterated that the Soviet Union required a modern military to defend the homeland "as long as we live in a troubled world . . . ." In addition the Soviet Union needed an armed force "to thwart an attack and defeat the aggressor under any conditions." Such a deterrent power, the authors concluded, gave the USSR the ability to act as "the chief bulwark of peace in the world."<sup>14</sup>

With the relatively recent promotion of the Soviet Navy to new levels of respectability, the West has observed Admiral S. G. Gorshkov voicing a more diplomatic, but just as effective, policy that naval power encourages detente. The leader of the Soviet Navy has made a clear effort to present a counter argument to those in the USSR who have consistently defined Soviet armed forces as "defenders of the homeland." The modern Soviet fleet, Gorshkov has written, has given the USSR the ability to limit American naval force projection and has "fundamentally altered the relative strength of forces and the situation in this sphere of contention." Thus, naval presence and increased strength are viewed as the right of a great power and as "a formidable force for the deterrence of aggression, and as a result an ingredient that preserved world peace."<sup>15</sup>

While Soviet military writers emphasize the importance of deterrence, Soviet civilians seem to have a greater propensity to stress that detente is not an easy path nor a road that will be achieved without conflicts and setbacks. In 1973 the Soviet journal *International Affairs* warned that it was "utopian" to disregard the possibility of conflicts between the United States and USSR because their differing social systems made armed clashes more probable. In the same period, Brezhnev, who is as closely tied to detente as any leader of the USSR ever has been, warned the world that in spite of Soviet hopes for the success of detente, "we are realists and we cannot fail to see facts of a different sort. We all well know that wars and acute international crises are far from being a matter of the past."<sup>16</sup>

At the same time, there is another thread running through Soviet thought that views general nuclear detente as necessary given the ramifications of a nuclear war for both the United States and Soviet Union. In a recent article, Georgi Arbatov, director of the USSR Academy of Sciences' Institute for the Study of the USA and Canada, stressed that there are greater mutual bonds between the United States and USSR than there are enmities and hatreds. As the only two supernuclear and industrial powers, both nations should realize the importance of avoiding nuclear confrontation. "In the nuclear age there is no acceptable alternative to peaceful coexistence, that is to say, to detente and normalcy." A second important commonality for Arbatov was the desire of both nations to direct more resources toward solving domestic problems. Thus, slowing the nuclear arms race would free money for other government tasks. Finally, Arbatov wrote that general cooperation in the areas of science, technology, trade and cultural exchange would benefit both parties.<sup>17</sup>

What should be understood then is that, just as in the American case, there may be no single Soviet view on detente and deterrence. Different factions and power blocs, each with their own titular speaker, have voiced their opinions on what is feasible and practical in the areas of detente and deterrence. Partly, the problem exists because the Soviet Union still views itself as the primary leader of a revolutionary anti-imperialist movement but at the same time recognizes that it must function within a world of politics based on status quo oriented nations. Thus, the USSR feels no guilt pangs in stating its interest in detente but at the same time declaring detente will not limit its support for "wars of liberation" or support for groups that are trying to break the "grasping hand of imperialism."<sup>18</sup>

For one group of American scholars, this Soviet view implies a disingenuous view of detente. Detente, they feel, is not a goal of the USSR. The Soviets are only interested in detente as a guise or a means to soften American concern while the USSR passes the United States militarily.<sup>19</sup> Such views, however, overlook the fact that detente and deterrence are dynamically interrelated in Soviet perspective, just as the concepts are interrelated in the American eyes. Detente and deterrence both can be objectives but neither is an end in itself.

Two strikingly similar remarks made by former President Gerald Ford and Grechko on November 7, 1975, reemphasize that both nations want strong military deterrent capabilities while attempting to improve relations between the United States and USSR. In Boston,

Ford stated American forces were second to none "and I will take whatever steps are necessary to see that they remain second to none." Thousands of miles to the east the Soviet Defense Minister declared the USSR would "make untiring efforts to strengthen the economic and defensive might of our motherland."<sup>20</sup>

Analyzing statements made by Ford, Brezhnev, Schlesinger, Grechko, Kissinger and Gromyko are a must in understanding the linkage between detente and deterrence, but such analysis will not provide a complete picture. For one thing, public statements are amalgamations of numerous thoughts and may be generated by events other than a public figure's attempt to clarify his government's position. Depending on who makes a statement, the ideas espoused may depict views of an interest group that fails to reflect the government position. Also, public declarations have a tendency to stress the urgency or uniqueness of their thoughts and fail to develop the historical evolution of government policies.

#### DETENTE'S HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

It is the latter point—historical evolution—that we briefly want to analyze. First, we need to examine the evolution of present day detente to gain a better feeling for the dynamic nature of detente. Then we will survey changing American defense policies since World War II in order to gain an appreciation for the continuity in the American position.

After years of diplomatic nonrecognition of the USSR, Western attempts to overthrow the Soviet government, and two decades of Soviet vilification of the American "capitalist imperialist," Washington and Moscow temporarily buried the guantlets to save each nation from a military defeat during the 1940's. The cessation of American and Soviet vilification during the war years was a temporary arrangement which one author aptly described as a title for his book, *Illusion and Necessity*.<sup>21</sup> The lack of war time common objectives, other than defeating Germany and Japan, ultimately caused the disintegration of the alliance and the Cold War.

Events after 1945, however, should not blur the fact that during the war the United States and USSR established a monumental precedent. Both states could forego ideological, military and governmental inhibitions for a goal which both defined as essential to preserve world stability and peace. Similarly the World War II experience illuminates that agreement on one objective, however, does not cause unanimity for all goals.



### *Geneva Spirit.*

Following the World War II friendship, a decade lapsed before the two superpowers made constructive steps toward reducing tensions between them. The first indications of Soviet interest in US and USSR arms control began in 1954. In the fall of that year, Andrei Vyshinsky, Foreign Minister of the USSR, announced that the Soviet Union would accept Western views that conventional and nuclear disarmament were interrelated. In the spring of 1955, the USSR made an even larger step toward East-West cooperation when the Soviet government consented to return oil fields seized from Austria during the war, agreed to withdraw troops from Austrian territory, and signed a peace treaty with Austria making that state permanently neutral. On May 10, 1955, the USSR made a grandiose disarmament proposal that called for the total abolition of nuclear weapons and a one-third reduction in conventional forces. The latter proposal was held in abeyance until the major world power convened the proposed summit meeting in Geneva during the summer. For the next 2 months the USSR made additional steps, including the return of US lend-lease vessels, public announcements praising President Eisenhower, and numerous official state visits with Westerners, that gave Western government officials an optimistic feeling that postwar tensions between the West and the Soviet Union were relaxing.<sup>22</sup>

This general attitude, "The Geneva Spirit," failed to reach full fruition at the Geneva Summit meeting. Rather than just discussing the general issue of disarmament, the heads of states also discussed European security, reunification of Germany and cultural and economic exchange programs. As one group of authors has stated, "various issues and proposals dealing with control of armament were soon overshadowed by the chief item of contention at the Summit: European security and Germany."<sup>23</sup>

The Geneva Summit thus resulted in no discussions of a substantive nature and the issues in question were put on the agenda for a subsequent Foreign Ministers' conference. Despite the lack of agreement, the general aura of relaxed tension continued for approximately a year until the Spirit of Geneva ultimately collapsed upon the Soviet repression of the Hungarian Revolution.

As with the Grand Alliance era, one can deduce some apparent lessons for detente from the 1955-56 period. First, if one assumes that both the United States and USSR were sincere in their interests to relax

postwar tensions, it demonstrates that the task is more than a single objective but is a multifaceted job. As in the case of the Geneva Summit meeting, detente cannot be treated separately from other issues and this may cause diversion of attention. Second, an interest in general disarmament can easily become embroiled in other explosive issues like European security and Germany. Finally, bureaucratic inertia and preconceived ideas can cause nations to misjudge an opportunity to achieve a goal.

#### *Spirit of Camp David.*

In the late 1950's the world again experienced a brief rapprochement between the USSR and the United States. The new relaxation is commonly called "The Spirit of Camp David," because Eisenhower and Khrushchev held the summit meeting at the President's retreat in 1959. Again no substantive agreements occurred from the Camp David meetings, but a general feeling of detente did develop. Partly this occurred because Khrushchev had backed down on earlier bellicose remarks on Berlin and likewise retracted an ultimatum issued to the West on Berlin. Just the idea of Khrushchev coming symbolized a new Soviet attitude since no other Soviet statesman had visited the United States. An agreement reached in September 1959 to convene another disarmament conference which would consider Soviet proposals on arms control also helped. While the manifestations of the "Camp David Spirit" are important, they have been discussed elsewhere<sup>24</sup> and this paper is more concerned with the motivating reasons behind detente.

The following detailed quote by Khrushchev seems to put Soviet interests at that time in a proper perspective. More than a decade after the events, Khrushchev wrote that the Camp David Spirit provided propaganda benefit but most important it was required as a breathing space to reach equality with the United States:

It was our side who raised the matter of withdrawing troops from other countries—in other words, eliminating our military bases on foreign territory. This would have meant dismantling both the NATO and Warsaw Pact alliances. The Americans weren't prepared to go this far. They rejected our proposal. Actually, we knew that the conditions for such an agreement were not yet ripe and that our proposal was premature. In fact, our proposal was intended to serve a propagandistic, rather than a realistic purpose.

The Americans, for their part, were willing to accept a ban on the

production and testing of nuclear weapons, but only on the conditions that international controls were established. Specifically, they insisted on an agreement which would allow both sides to conduct reconnaissance flights over each other's territories. This condition was unacceptable to us at that time. I stress, *at that time*. First, America was in a much stronger position than we were as regards both the number of nuclear weapons it had and also its delivery system. Second, the Americans had us surrounded on all sides with their military bases, including air bases, while our own airplanes couldn't even reach the United States. Third, *certain instruments can be mounted on foreign territory to detect atomic testing at a great distance*, but, here again, the Americans had an advantage because they had their military installations all around our borders. In short, their suggestion for a system of international supervision wasn't fair or equal. Therefore we couldn't accept it.

What you have to remember is that when I faced the problem of disarmament, we lagged significantly behind the US in both warheads and missiles, and the US was out of range for our bombers. We could blast into dust America's allies in Europe and Asia, but America itself—with its huge economic and military potential—was beyond our reach. As long as they had such superiority over us, it was easier for them to determine the most expedient moment to start a war. Remember: we had enemies who believed conflict was inevitable and were in a hurry to finish us off before it was too late. That's why I was convinced that as long as the US held a big advantage over us, we couldn't submit to international disarmament controls.<sup>25</sup>

There were probably other issues motivating Khrushchev but they can be related to Khrushchev's reflections. The Soviet leader realized that he would not be able to keep the growing rift between the Soviet Union and China secret for much longer. Thus, when rift became an open ideological chasm, Khrushchev could retreat to the propagandistic position as the leader of the Socialist peace-lovers who championed eliminating foreign bases while labeling China as a war monger. By reducing the idea of a direct American attack on the USSR, Khrushchev made it more politically palatable to cut Soviet conventional forces in 1960 and to redirect funds into strategic forces in order to redress the adverse balance between American and Soviet ICBM's and strategic bombers.

Khrushchev's *Memoirs* poignantly depict the dynamic nature of detente. In the Soviet perspective of 1959 reduced tensions had a political objective—propaganda. At the same time it had a military goal that focused on removing the possibility of imminent war so the USSR could obtain a more equal position vis-a-vis the West. Slowing the conflict with the United States also would enable the USSR to face

other domestic issues as well as perceived foreign threats. Finally, Moscow's saber rattling, over Berlin, for just one example, had produced no tangible results. It seems safe to hypothesize, in accordance with Khrushchev's remarks, that the Soviet leader believed that reduced tensions might better facilitate Soviet objectives in Berlin since bellicose actions had failed.

#### *Post-Cuban Missile Crisis.*

The detente years from 1963 to the fall of Khrushchev also need a brief survey. Moscow's adventuristic effort to redress the Caribbean balance of power failed and nearly resulted in a military confrontation. Failure in Cuba coupled with Kennedy's goal of an 800 Minuteman ICBM force must have made Khrushchev conclude that it would be in the USSR's best interests not to anger the United States. Military antagonism would only widen the gap between American and Soviet forces and add fuel to an American fire to surpass the Soviet Union even further than it already had.

A gamut of other issues most assuredly weighed on Khrushchev's mind and caused him to move toward reducing East-West tensions. First, Soviet economic growth had dropped to less than 3 percent. As Thomas W. Wolfe has written, "The Soviet perceived need to meet consumer expectations, bolster a flagging agriculture, and at the same time meet space and defense needs intensified the perennial problem of resource allocation with which the Soviet leadership once again found itself confronted in the aftermath of Cuba."<sup>26</sup> Second, the open chasm between China and the USSR, which was thrown into the world arena in late 1962 and 1963, may have eliminated any Soviet pangs of conscience that rapprochement with the West might alienate the Chinese. By 1963, China and Moscow had crossed the Rubicon and there was little opportunity for mending the break.

The three so-called detente eras help to depict the dynamic changing nature of the phenomenon called detente. No one issue in every case caused an interest in relaxing tensions. A myriad of events seemed to intermingle. At the same time, however, it seems apparent that rapprochement was never considered a sole goal. Detente tendencies often developed when more bellicose actions, e.g., the Berlin and Cuban methods failed disastrously. Moreover, relaxing tensions often resulted during a period when the USSR felt a necessity to regroup and to handle other problem areas while at the same time trying to redress an



adverse balance of power relationship. Finally, and most important, Khrushchev's thoughts on the 1959 era indicate that a long-term detente era is impossible unless both sides perceive that they have sufficient military force—deterrent abilities—to handle any contingency if detente should fail. This latter issue is important for understanding the linkage between detente and deterrence. Thus, we should pause and examine in a very general fashion American post-World War II defense positions, which include the doctrinal gamut from containment and massive retaliation through Schlesinger's counterforce and Kissinger's detente. From such an analysis both intellectual and substantive trends can be clarified.

#### US DEFENSE POSITIONS

##### *Containment.*

While the American containment posture is normally dated from the 1947 "Mr. X." (George F. Kennan) article in *Foreign Affairs*, the roots to containment originated during and immediately after World War II. Kennan formalized a philosophy that already had obtained general credence in both the State and War Departments and only needed a spokesman to vocalize the beliefs. The post-World War II policymakers had reached intellectual maturity during the 20th century when the world was wrecked by war, depression, the rise of fascism and renewed war. A general consensus developed that each one of these phenomenon proceeded from the other in an almost cyclical development.<sup>27</sup>

American military planners thought that American demobilization after World War II had encouraged aggressors. Thus, military representatives wanted to retain a strong military force that was dispersed in worldwide bases to repel any future aggressors. By 1945, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had developed an intricate system that defined foreign bases as "essential" and "required." "Essential" bases, which JCS defined as the "long term right to use as a military base under exclusive control of the United States," included Canton, Galapagos, Panama, Iceland, Greenland, the Azores, all the Japanese mandated and Central Pacific islands. In addition, JCS thought that the American military required base rights in the Philippines, Formosa, Dakar, Monrovia, and Casablanca.<sup>28</sup> These bases would be the first line of America's defense and, if necessary, the American military could use the bases as staging areas to quell world problems.

While political postwar planners held a somewhat more abstract

philosophy than the military, their plan was just as global, but it was even more anti-Soviet. The State Department concluded that events of the twenties and thirties represented a general pattern: retarded international trade led to depressions, the rise of totalitarian governments and eventual world wars. As long as nations attempted to construct closed economic systems through bilateral trade and cartel agreements as the fascists did prior to World War II and the Soviets intended to do after the war, political policymakers feared that the cycle of depression and war would be reinitiated.<sup>29</sup> The chief instigator of the cycle, political policymakers believed, would be the USSR because, by the end of World War II, Washington was convinced that there was little political, economic, or military difference between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, before Kennan canonized the containment doctrine in 1947 by writing, "United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies," a compatible and receptive military and political philosophy already existed. Political policymakers had defined the USSR as America's inimical enemy. To handle the intellectual flip flop from viewing Stalin as "Uncle Joe" to a pathological destroyer of dissent and a world conqueror, the United States created a mental image that substituted Stalin for Hitler as the anti-Christ. America's responsibility then was to lead the fight, as it had against Hitler, to resist the USSR.

American military distribution provided the sources to enact that political philosophy. With American troops in Okinawa, Midway, Wake, Guam, occupying Japan, and Germany, the United States had a military structure that encircled the USSR and gave Washington the ability to strike rapidly at any troubled spot in the world.

Containment was, and still is, a dynamic philosophy. In its early years, economic and political issues developed as its manifestations. The Truman Doctrine (1947) and Marshall Plan (1948) had as fundamental tenets that the situations in Greece, Turkey, and Western Europe required American assistance to bolster faltering economies and make those areas less vulnerable to Soviet advances. In later years economic motivations continued but also containment acquired a militarized character. NATO, SEATO, CENTO, the Korean War, and Vietnam are just a few of the manifestations of a militarized containment doctrine.

For some this overview of containment will correctly seem cursory, for others it will seem very detailed in a summary of American

deterrence philosophy since World War II, but whatever view one ascribes, a discussion of containment is necessary. A containment mentality has pervaded the thoughts of political and military leaders since World War II. Massive retaliation, flexible response, and counterforce all have similar intellectual underpinnings: Moscow was America's number one enemy; the USSR was an aggressive military power that would exploit any opportunity for territorial aggrandizement; and the United States had to act as the free world's policeman by using political, economic, and if need be, military means to thwart the Soviet Union's expansionist tendencies.

#### *Massive Retaliation.*

As mentioned above, containment has formed the basis of American foreign and defense policy since World War II. However, major modifications to that basic policy have occurred. The first, and possibly the most dynamic, modification was "Massive Retaliation."

Secretary of State John F. Dulles institutionalized the doctrine on January 12, 1954, during a speech "Foreign Policies and National Security: Maximum Deterrent at Bearable Cost," before the Council on Foreign Relations. Dulles said that the West needed a more cost effective method than local ground forces for meeting aggression. For Dulles the tool to achieve "maximum deterrent at bearable cost" was military deterrence through the use of "massive retaliatory power." The United States, the Secretary of State maintained, would no longer feel compelled to keep future conflicts at the level which they began. America would supplement its conventional defensive strength "by the striking power of strategic air" in order "to respond vigorously at places and with means of its own choosing."<sup>31</sup>

Thus, Dulles introduced a new phenomenon into the arena of postwar defense thought. Truman's containment was based on economic assistance and limited conventional military aid and intervention. Dulles, however, implied that the United States might use nuclear weapons, either in a limited or strategic fashion, to curb limited aggression.

In subsequent years a great debate developed over Dulles' Massive Retaliation doctrine: Was it a credible deterrent philosophy; was it feasible? Did Dulles have significant support within the Eisenhower Administration for his philosophy? As an all encompassing military deterrence philosophy, Massive Retaliation was inadequate. It failed to



equate the punishment with the crime. Moreover, no certainty existed that the United States would use the approach or tactics suggested by the Secretary to gain its policy objectives. Nevertheless, Massive Retaliation was an important evolutionary step for American deterrence philosophies.

*Flexible Response.*

After Massive Retaliation, no American policymaker thought in solely conventional terms. To have a credible defensive posture the United States had to integrate conventional and nuclear philosophies. The logical outcome of this integration was the "Flexible Response" era of the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations with Robert S. McNamara acting as the chief architect of the policy. Two themes solidified "Flexible Response" through two administrations and nearly one decade.

First, the United States had to have the strategic nuclear means to destroy the USSR. To accomplish this goal McNamara argued in every Department of Defense Posture Statement from 1961-68 that the United States had to base its strategic judgments on "worst case analysis" and "assured destruction capability." In other words, McNamara constructed the strategic force structure around the following worst case concepts: the United States had to be conservative in its estimates of Soviet capabilities; Soviet military capabilities reflected intentions; America assumed that the USSR would attack the West if the opportunity was available; and the United States believed that communism was still a general aggressive world movement and the United States had to deter "The Soviets from doing something."<sup>32</sup> Having defined the "enemy," McNamara's "assured destruction capability" told how the United States would counter the Soviet strategic threat. The cornerstone of American strategic policy was deterring a deliberate attack upon the United States. To do this the United States attempted to construct a strategic force structure that had "a highly reliable ability to inflict unacceptable damage upon any single aggressor or combination of aggressors . . . even after absorbing a surprise first strike."<sup>33</sup> During McNamara's tenure the discussions on the level of destruction to be inflicted upon the Soviet Union varied as American technological abilities increased the accuracy of American weapons. Whether the United States could destroy one-fifth, one-fourth, or two-thirds of the USSR's industrial and military capacity

is a moot point here. The important issue is that "assured destruction" meant "our ability to destroy an attacker as a viable 20th Century nation that provides the deterrent . . . ."34

The second major portion of "Flexible Response" was an adjunct of the strategic nuclear strategy and called for a credible nonnuclear force that would operate under the nuclear umbrella. Kennedy laid the ground-work for this approach early in his presidency when he called for greater options than "inglorious retreat or unlimited retaliation."<sup>35</sup> Thus, at the same time that the Secretary of Defense built strategic nuclear forces he also presided over a defense establishment that attempted to create a general purpose force structure that could dispense military punishments in accordance with crimes. In action this meant increasing the Army from 11 to 16 divisions, providing counter guerrilla training in the armed forces, establishing units like the Special Forces for limited warfare use, upgrading American tactical capabilities through purchasing new armored personnel carriers, new tanks and self-propelled artillery pieces, strengthening American forces in NATO, and increasing American air and sea lift capability.

Despite the myriad of conventional measures, the United States always held nuclear options in case conventional repulses of the USSR should fail. For example, in 1967 McNamara warned the USSR that a Soviet attack in Western Europe "would carry with it all the attendant risks of rapid escalation to nuclear war." The Secretary reemphasized this point the next year when he said American support for Europe was based on the idea that "the Soviet Union, and especially her East European Allies, would have to assume that the West might react . . . with nuclear weapons."<sup>36</sup>

Subsequent defense positions have done little to change the basic philosophy of "Flexible Response."<sup>37</sup> Even though former Secretary of Defense Schlesinger enunciated a thought-provoking "counterforce" philosophy (or the ability for accurate targeting of opponents' missiles) in 1974,<sup>38</sup> the basic beliefs in strategic thinking remain the same as under "Flexible Response." Nuclear deterrence is the basis of American military doctrine. If nuclear deterrence should fail, the US military should have the flexibility to respond in a selective manner either in a strategic nuclear character, in a limited war response like Vietnam, or in a conventional warfare mode under the umbrella of possible use of tactical and strategic nuclear weapons.

#### CONCLUSIONS

After surveying American defense policies since World War II, the

obvious question is how well have they worked? Have American doctrines coupled with US military force structures deterred the type of aggression they were designed to counter? Unfortunately the answer is a two-part one which must conclude on one hand little success and on the other hand it is difficult, if not impossible, to make a conclusive decision.

First, the United States has not been able to create a world environment free from conflict. Since World War II, limited conflicts in which the United States had to make a decision have occurred on an average of one per year.<sup>39</sup> In some form or fashion either through military aid and/or American forces, the United States has been involved in a majority of the conflicts. Thus, it seems safe to conclude that American defense policies, based on the strategic and tactical nuclear umbrella, have not, and probably never will, alone, deter limited wars.

Second, it is difficult to prove empirically that American policies from containment to counterforce have accomplished the essential goal for which they were established, i.e., deterring a Soviet attack upon allies of the United States. Because of containment and "worse case analysis" philosophies, America has assumed that the lack of a Soviet attack proves the validity of deterrence. While this may very well be true, one could make an argument equally difficult to prove empirically, that no attack was ever intended and the United States, as two authors have said recently, "may frequently be deterring a threat which does not exist."<sup>40</sup>

There are several conclusions that one can draw from this brief study which should shed some insight on present Soviet-American problems. As exists in America, Soviet leaders must balance their foreign policies among a number of interest groups. No longer does one man rule the Soviet system as existed under Stalin. Current Soviet leaders rule more like a "bureaucratic oligarchy." Thus, for the immediate future, the West will observe what appears as discontinuities in both Soviet policy and statements by government spokesmen. Overly abrasive Soviet behavior should be studied, and if need be, countered by appropriate actions. However, it should be understood that when a Grechko, Ustinov, or Gorshkov call for additional military hardware, someone like Arbatov, who Brezhnev respects as an adviser, is at the same time championing the cause of detente. Quite possibly the USSR has not completely concluded which road to follow. It would be a sorry mistake, and a failure to learn from history, if the United States



allowed an opportunity like Khrushchev's 1954 and 1955 efforts to escape the West again.

Second, castigating Moscow for its lack of interest in detente because the Soviet Union seeks naval bases in the Indian Ocean, provides arms support to the Arabs, or gives moral and economic support to North Korea, North Vietnam, and the sundry left wing groups in Portugal, Spain and Africa *probably* will yield few constructive gains. The United States is just as susceptible to a label of adventurism and a lack of interest in detente. We continue to provide military assistance to Israel, are building a naval port in Diego Garcia, and are renegotiating base rights all over the world.

Third, which is very much related to the second point, the United States needs to understand and accept, which the Soviets have done, that detente never was conceived as an end to world power differences. Moreover, *detente impulses for both sides have not eliminated the perceived need for military forces.* It is often stated that Soviet military forces have a two-pronged role—to deter but if deterrence fails to win wars.<sup>41</sup> The American military has the same mission. Detente then will not eliminate the possibility of war. Detente, however, is an effort to put war on a more manageable plane and reduce the probability of destruction by nuclear means. As former Secretary of State Kissinger once told congressional leaders, "Detente is a process, not a permanent achievement."<sup>42</sup>

Fourth, deterrence and detente are integrally related. Since conflict, whether it be military, economic, political, social, ideological, or psychological, is *the norm* among nations, particularly those with different perceptions for organizing the world arena, it would be foolish to expect the United States or the USSR to accept detente without having the means to react militarily should detente fail. Thus, we will continue to see both the United States and the USSR working to build their military forces at the same time they pursue detente paths.<sup>43</sup>



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Some would like to convince us that the process of detente in the world and support of the national liberation struggle are incompatible things. Similar things have been maintained before, but in vain. The process of detente does not mean freezing of the social-political status quo in the world and the cessation of anti-imperialist struggles of the people for a better and just fate, and against foreign interference and oppression.

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concludes that there is very little difference between Soviet and US positions. The detente impulse relates to nuclear war avoidance. Conventional and nuclear deterrence capabilities are efforts to be prepared in case detente should fail. From their declaratory positions the United States and the Soviet Union recognize this interrelationship between detente and deterrence. Since it would be folly to ask nations to overlook the possibility that detente may fail someday, for the foreseeable future we will continue to see both the United States and the USSR work to build their military forces as the same time they pursue detente paths.

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